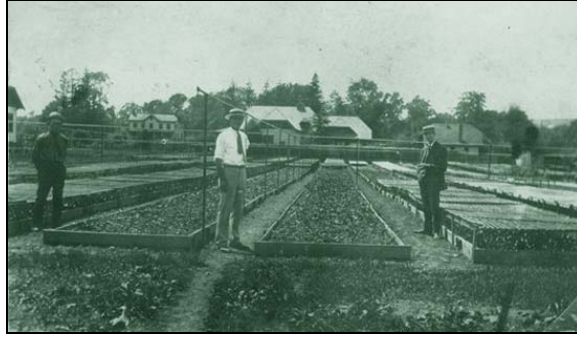


PRINCETON NURSERIES KINGSTON SITE: CULTURAL LANDSCAPE REPORT



CHAPTER IV: LANDSCAPE CONTEXT & ANALYSIS

A. NURSERY OPERATIONS & PRINCETON NURSERIES CONTEXT

In order to best understand the origins and evolution of the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site, a summary chronology of nursery operations and landscape context is provided.

1911 Increasing suburban development in New Jersey and nearby states lead to the need for more plant material, while at the same time reducing potential agricultural area.

1911 The need to increase plant production and increasing suburban development in the Springfield area lead William Flemer Sr., accompanied by his son William Jr., to look for an appropriate place to expand operations.

1913 The Kingston area was chosen for a new branch nursery and F&F purchased the Myrick Farm, the first farm of many to come as a base for its new branch.”

1914 The Flemers purchased a second farm, the ‘Johnty” Higgins Farm.

1915 The need for organization within the nursery business became apparent among nurserymen, particularly those practicing in New Jersey. Formal organization would provide nursery professionals with an outlet for discussion and information passing. Knowledge and advances in propagating and growing new varieties was one important topic. Additionally, plant disease and insects were both growing problems with little research on how to adequately address these issues. However, several individuals recognized that a formal nurserymen’s organization could promote a research program and provide valuable opportunities for practical research in the field. Perhaps most importantly, organization would help resolve lack of information sharing and communication issues, especially as they relate to plant production. Plant production was initially uncontrolled and unregulated, which resulted in surpluses and price cutting for certain varieties and shortages of other varieties. In addition to resolving issues, the nurserymen also saw organization as a way to forge relationships with each other and share valuable experiences. The emergence of the issues and willingness to work towards solutions prompted the establishment of the New Jersey Association of Nurserymen.¹

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1915 The nursery business in New Jersey has considerably expanded. By 1915, 161 nurseries have been certified with the State Department of Agriculture.²

1915 The Flemers purchased a third farm, the Archibald Gulick Farm (also called the John Rutherford Farm.

1915 April 26. Princeton Nurseries prepared a planting plan for the college. (Not identified which college.)³

1916 The New Jersey State Department of Agriculture formed. The Department's interaction with the nurserymen related primarily to inspecting nursery stock. However, the Department was sympathetic to the issues that existed within the trade. The Department and nurserymen developed a reciprocal relationship; the State Department of Agriculture aimed to define controls and solutions that would help bolster the nursery business while the nurserymen provided valuable survey and statistical information based on their stock.⁴

1916 The Flemers purchased a third farm, the Mathew Van Dyke Farm, including the house 'Mapleton' which was to serve as the home William Flemer Sr. until his death and after that of William Flemer Jr. until his death.

1916 The Japanese beetle was found and identified in New Jersey. It spread throughout the state by the late 1920s. To help contain the spread, a quarantine was set up, first within the state, and then in other states. As part of the quarantine, nurseries could not transport any plants with soil attached unless the soil was treated and the shipment inspected and certified by the state and US Department of Agriculture. Arsenate of lead was approved and used to control spread of the infestation. However, in the long term, this caused a chemical reaction in the soil and plants developed a toxicity and nurseries lost a considerable amount of stock. As a result, nurseries reduced production of balled and burlap trees, keeping enough for local trade only.⁵

1917-1919 The US entered World War I, which resulted in numerous domestic restrictions, notably transportation. Restrictions and US involvement in the war affected the nursery business. Growth of residential communities in the US slowed during the war years, decreasing the demand for nursery stock. Additionally, a limited number of workers were available for "non-essential production" and instead people began to establish Victory Gardens, which did not require nursery stock.⁶

1917 William Flemer Jr. was involved in the early organization of the New Jersey Association of Nurserymen (NJAN). In May, he writes to at least two other members, Paul V. Fortmiller at the Jackson & Perkins Company and Hort Bowden at Rice Brothers Co., to make suggestions for the upcoming annual meeting. In a May 23 letter to Fortmiller, Flemer stressed the importance of organizing the nursery trade, noting "the deplorable fact that our trade is not organized and pulling together with a definite aim in view. That is the proposition and it is our greatest problem."⁷

1917 June: William Flemer Jr joined the newly organized Princeton University Ambulance Corps, SSU-523. In September the unit arrived in France. While in France Flemer was

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influenced by the French Landscape and made plans for the development of Kingston Site and the organization of its nursery operation

1919 In 1919, foreign nursery stock imports were quarantined – US Quarantine #37. Prior to this, wholesale growers depended on European imports. A few more progressive nurserymen grew larger trees and evergreens to supply growing demand for landscape plantings and some began propagating their own lining-out stock to “develop a better selection of desirable ornamentals, true to name, acclimated to our climate, and available for inspection by the buyer.” However, European imports were still heavily relied upon. The quarantine prohibited shipment of balled plants or any foreign materials with soil attached, although it allowed bare-root stock. The quarantine increased the demand for lining-out stock at local nurseries. F&F Nurseries, which had already established itself as a strong source of stock, was well placed to take advantage of the increased demand.⁸

1920s In the years leading up to World War I, typical nurseries supplied local demand and encompassed about 10 acres of land. During the 1920s, new nursery businesses were established and existing enterprises expanded. The nursery business experienced a prosperous boom period that results from two main factors: the growth of the suburbs and a quarantine on foreign nursery stock imports. Suburban development expanded and the demand for nursery stock increased as homeowners looked to enhance their yards. The 1919 quarantine increased the demand for locally grown stock. Another result of the quarantine on foreign stock was that European nurseries began to suffer and many nurserymen moved to the US to either establish new or work for existing nurseries. Many of the European nurserymen moved to New Jersey because of its convenient location between New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Washington DC. They were also attracted to the area because of the existing transportation facilities and the climate facilitated growth of a wide variety of plant materials.⁹ Other factors include the fact that municipalities began establishing local shade tree commissions and planted shade trees along public roadways. Additionally, as nurseries were able to consistently raise their prices each year, the cost of farm labor stayed inexpensive.¹⁰

1920s F & F Nurseries prospered through the 1920s boom period. F & F Nurseries was a valuable supplier of ornamental and shade trees for which the suburban growth spreading throughout New Jersey, Long Island, and Orange and Westchester Counties in New York provided an outlet.¹¹ The Kingston branch of F&F continued to expand; the Flemers bought additional properties and also leased land from others to accommodate increased demand.

1921 Amendments were made to the 1919 US Quarantine #37 that impact existing US nurseries with both positive and negative results. The amendments made further restrictions on foreign imports. Only new varieties, stock not available in the US, and certain bulbs were permitted into the country. Initially, this stimulated further growth and expansion of existing US nurseries. However, it also resulted in some negative effects. At first, the amendments stimulated propagation and production in established nurseries. Nurserymen were able to sell virtually any stock, including varieties that would later prove to be inferior. Horticultural standards had not yet been defined and limited grading and inspection standards created a general confusion throughout the industry and among customers. The impact these factors had on the nursery trade did not become evident until

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after the Great Depression set in. Varieties that were now proving to be inferior could only be sold at extremely low prices.¹²

1926 The New Jersey Federation of Shade Tree Commissions formed.¹³ This provided a business outlet for F & F Nurseries, which was a principal supplier of ornamental and shade trees.¹⁴

1930 Congress passed US Plant Patent Law, which protects the introducer of new plants for a period of 17 years. Passage of this law encouraged selection and hybridization of superior ornamentals.¹⁵

1930 Princeton Nurseries collaborated with the National Home Planting Bureau and American Association of Nurserymen and published a 'How to Make an Outdoor Living Room' booklet. The book encouraged homeowners to transform their backyards into lush outdoor living rooms and used images and simple plan drawings to illustrate how to create such a space.¹⁶

1931 Princeton Nurseries published a Princeton Products brochure. As an introduction, William Flemer Jr. described the "Princeton ideal." Flemer noted that "the policies which govern our business are different than those of most commercial nurseries serving the plant buying public." He further explains that the company mission of Princeton Nurseries is not merely to produce volume, but to use "intelligent study to produce plants of finest quality and value in all the more desirable varieties" and that they "set out deliberately to make the name 'Princeton Products' synonymous with the highest grade nursery stock that modern equipment, skill, patience, and careful training could produce."¹⁷ The remainder of the guide describes the quality of stock and range of available varieties. Flemer invites readers to visit the nursery grounds and experience the "Princeton Ideal" firsthand. An annotated aerial image of the nursery grounds and photographs throughout the guide help familiarize potential customers with the grounds and quality of products and service.¹⁸ Overall, the catalog illustrates Princeton Nurseries' commitment to both innovation and excellence in plant production and propagation.

1930s The nursery business experienced a period of economic depression and reevaluation. Sales and available jobs plummeted and land values in rural areas dropped to 1/3 or 1/4 their value in 1928 or 1929. This was particularly a problem for nurseries that expanded their acreage during the 1920s boom. In spite of the depressed market, nurserymen upheld an optimism for the future of the business and developed a trade policy of reduced production, expenses for equipment, wages, etc. As they curtailed production, they worked to keep their existing stock in as good as shape as possible and sought every available sales outlet, despite the drastically reduced prices. In the early 1930s, pump priming helped sustain the industry. Notably, Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects addressed parks, streets, and highways, all of which utilized a considerable amount of plant materials. The New Jersey State Highway Department also began planting roadways and interchanges as the start of a broader policy to plant all major highways and parkways.¹⁹

1930s Overall, the adversities of the 1930s prompted the growth of new ideas and ways to revitalize the industry. One such avenue explored was the idea of cooperative advertising. This ranged from newspaper advertising to more elaborate efforts, like staging sample landscape projects at events such as flower shows. The idea of developing an outdoor living room was also promoted.²⁰ In 1930, Princeton Nurseries collaborated with the National Home Planting Bureau and American

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Association of Nurserymen and published a 'How to Make an Outdoor Living Room' booklet. The book encouraged homeowners to transform their backyards into lush outdoor living rooms and used images and simple plan drawings to illustrate how to create such a space.²¹

1930s At Princeton Nurseries William Flemer Jr. was able to keep the expansive nursery grounds in tact during the Depression. Although business was slow and Flemer has acquired debt, the bank did not foreclose because he held so much land already and Flemer continued to pay on the interest as best as he could. Because of the limited market for nursery stock, Flemer planted apple orchards and raised some steer and pigs on the nursery lands.²²

1930s In response to the depressed market, nurserymen made adjustments to the industry. New production was more selective and cautious than it had been previously. The new nursery material reflected a growing demand for better quality materials as well as for lower growing plants for home foundation plantings. As demand continued to grow, retail plant markets began to open, some of which opened as part of existing nurseries as a way to increase sales. The new retail markets became popular with the public. It also meant that plants could be grown and sold in one location from one business. This created demand for nurseries to provide greater variety, including perennials, bedding plants, in-season vegetables, and garden tools.²³

Late 1930s Construction and expansion of housing developments began to pick up. Much of the plantings used for the new housing as well as for a number of the highway and parkway projects were awarded under landscape contracts. All plants were subject to rigid inspections and only the highest rated plants were accepted. This was beneficial to nurseries as they could charge higher prices for the higher quality.²⁴

1941-1945 Princeton Nurseries struggled through World War II while also maintaining nursery stock. Nursery operations focused on producing mainly fruits and vegetables.²⁵ German prisoners-of-war were used for labor.²⁶ Princeton Nurseries continued to grow vegetable crops as World War II continued and as demand for nursery stock dropped. Crops scheduled to be to be planted in 1945 included 24 acres of tomatoes planted in blocks 99, 100, 109 and 119; about 20 acres of string beans; and 35 acres of lima beans.²⁷

1944 Princeton Nurseries encouraged the creation of Victory Gardens with their wholesale price list. The inside cover presented a "Special War Announcement to the Trade." In the announcement, William Flemer Jr. stated that the federal government has requested that those in the agricultural business produce as much food crops as possible to "alleviate a critical shortage facing our war programs." He further noted that Princeton Nurseries planned to use all available land for food production and he urged all other nurserymen to do the same. Flemer went on to explain that several years ago "before this country had been drawn into the present struggle" Princeton Nurseries had increased plant production. This meant that although they would dedicate available land to growing crops to aid in the war effort, they were also maintaining a considerable amount of nursery stock, notably ornamental trees, for sale.²⁸

1940s (Post WWII) & 1950s The Glassboro Service Association (GSA) was founded. GSA was an organization of New Jersey farmers that worked with the Puerto Rico Department of Labor to hire Puerto Rican workers. As part of the contract, laborers worked and lived in New Jersey from

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May through December of each year. As part of the contract, devised to protect the workers, employers agreed to pay a minimum wage, a minimum of 60 hours of work per month, at least one hot meal a day, and adequate housing. In addition, employers were also required to pay for the workers' airfare and medical insurance²⁹

1940s (Post WWII) & 1950s Princeton Nurseries began hiring contracted laborers through the Glassboro Service Association (GSA), but unlike most New Jersey farmers, Princeton Nurseries contracted workers on a seasonal not daily basis and provided the workers directly with housing, meals, medical insurance, airfare and legal help. In time Princeton Nurseries hired the workers directly rather than through GSA.

At Princeton Nurseries, contracting workers through the GSA was initially a way to deal with seasonal labor demands. William Flemer III and John Flemer ensured that they provided their workers with good and fair working conditions. To house the workers, they constructed a dormitory with outdoor pool on the nursery lands, southwest of the main office. As a result, the Nurseries, local workers and the Flemer family connected and formed relationships with the Puerto Rican workers. The Flemers developed a strong appreciation for Puerto Rican culture; they traveled to Puerto Rico on vacations; John Flemer bought a house on Vieques (PR); he also learned to speak Spanish fluently.³⁰

1956 The first of many Princeton Nurseries patents, William Flemer III's Shademaster Honey Locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Shademaster'), was patented."

1960s Development in the Princeton area increased as did the cost of available land."

1960 Princeton Nurseries sold several hundred acres on the east side of Route 1 and began to look beyond the immediate Kingston area for additional land to expand."

1962 Princeton Nurseries began purchasing available land in Allentown, New Jersey, where good land was available at a more reasonable cost, to expand the operations to meet a growing demand for nursery stock.³¹

1970s-1980s Continuing suburban development in central New Jersey and adjacent areas led to a greater demand for container products. Development of Princeton Forrestal Center and office/commercial use along Route 1 intensified demand for land and increased its price. "

1980s Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site began to put greater emphasis on container products. Numerous poly houses were erected to provide container products. A wholesale distribution yard was set up.

1982 Death of John W. Flemer.

1986 The estate taxes due to John Flemer's death were such that much of the Kingston Site had to be sold. Princeton University acquired 488 acres to be part of its Princeton Forrestal Center.

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1995 Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site closed and all remaining operations at the Kingston Site were consolidated on the Allentown Site to which most operations had been transferred the previous year as part of a “long term plan to operate more efficiently and competitively and competitively while maintaining [its] standard for quality and growth ...” as well as a fundamental change in the company’s infrastructure.

B. LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS OF CONTINUITY & CHANGE

The process of landscape analysis seeks to ascertain the levels of continuity and change within the former nursery landscape. The analysis of the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape compares existing character-defining features and landscape character to features and character that existed during the historic period, in the mid-1980s after the death of John Flemer and at the time of the subsequent sale of a portion of nursery lands. This period represents the close of the historic period; by the 1990s, the level of use has already decreased, as documented in 1995 aerial photographs. (See *Plan 7*).

While some individual elements of the landscape have been altered over time, existing features and broad landscape patterns and character reveal a degree of continuity. Historic patterns of spatial definition, land use, linear visual relationships, and circulation remain evident in the landscape today, conveying the historic character of the former working agricultural landscape. The persistence not only of historic organization but also of specific character-defining features contributes to the level of continuity evident today. In spite of changes that have occurred, the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site continues to embody the character and unique quality of the historic Princeton Nursery landscape particularly the spatial patterns of the final years of operations. Plan overlays showing 2011 plan linework over historic aerials illuminate the nursery landscape character and features over time:

- *Plan 14, Aerial Comparison 1930, 1975, 1995, 2002, 2007, 2010*
- *Plan 15, 1930-2011 Analysis Overlay*
- *Plan 16, 1975-2011 Analysis Overlay*
- *Plan 17, 1995-2011 Analysis Overlay*

By the mid-1980s, the Flemer family had established Princeton Nurseries as one of the most successful, largest nursery operations in the country with the Kingston Site serving as the base of operations. Linear and geometric spatial patterns defined the landscape with simple, functional buildings and structures contributing to the rural character. Some ornamental plantings near the operations core and primary entrance overlaid a scenic, designed element over the largely functional landscape. The character of this landscape composition today is compared to the as-built character to determine the integrity of this historic resource. This comparison is enumerated in the preceding narrative to indicate both retention of features and alteration of elements in recent decades.

Comparison of the historic period, as-built landscape in circa 1975, and the existing landscape is presented in the following narrative. The comparison focuses on Mapleton Preserve and adjacent parcels set aside as preserved open space. The discussion is supported by *Plan 15*, *Plan 16*, and *Plan*

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17. These overlay plans aid in gaining an understanding of landscape continuity and change that has occurred over time with regard to broader patterns of spatial definition and individual landscape features. The discussion of these three eras of overlays is organized according to character-defining features. Landscape features of today are compared over time to track the level of continuity and change, serving as a framework for landscape preservation treatment considerations. Landscape character-defining features are identified and described as a series of interrelated elements that together define the overall landscape character of the Kingston Site. These features include:

- *Spatial Organization, Land Patterns & Land Use*
- *Visual Relationships*
- *Topography & Natural Systems*
- *Vegetation*
- *Circulation*
- *Hydrology & Water Features*
- *Structures, Site Furnishings & Objects*

The continuity and change that is observed through time in these overlays demonstrates both enduring patterns and features and continued evolution of the Kingston Site landscape. The analysis discussion is framed with an overview of the character-defining features and their relationships to each other. Documentation of the landscape features supports an understanding of individual elements that have persisted or been removed over time, and identifies broader patterns of continuity and change in the Kingston Site landscape.

B1. Spatial Organization, Land Patterns & Land Use

Agricultural land uses at the Kingston Site shaped the spatial organization, creating rectilinear patterns of field production blocks, growing structures and wind rows, and for a period documented in the 1975 aerial, a combination of rectilinear and diagonal field and windrow patterns. In 2011, the land use has changed to former nursery in field succession, with the rectilinear spatial patterns of the field blocks remaining evident. During the historic period, the open, sunny landscape was organized by the expansive plant production fields with buildings and structures arranged in distinct clusters. (See Figures IV.1, IV.2, IV.3, and IV.4.) Today the majority of the somewhat ephemeral nursery growing support buildings, greenhouses, and hoop houses have been removed, although a few remain. The geometric forms on the former production fields continue to define broader patterns of space for the former nursery landscape. This landscape field pattern is a character-defining feature at the site. Extant circulation features continue to contribute to the linear spatial definition. (See Figure IV.5.) The historic spatial organization and land patterns remain evident in the landscape today, however land use has shifted over time. While historically the landscape supported a thriving nursery operation, today use focuses on passive public recreation in a cultural landscape. Although the historic use is no longer intact, strong opportunities exist to utilize continuing spatial definition to aid in interpreting the historic nursery use of the site while accommodating contemporary uses.

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B2. Visual Relationships

Visual relationships continue to be defined by the relationships between individual landscape features, primarily vegetation, topography, buildings and structures, and circulation. (See Figures IV.6 and IV.7.) Overall, visual relationships continue to be framed by the linear spatial patterns. Historically, the rows of nursery stock defined views through the landscape. Today, site vegetation frames viewsheds in the same way the nursery stock did historically, creating long, linear vistas along roads and access routes. This open, sunny field pattern in a rectilinear organization is a character-defining feature of this landscape. Management of existing site vegetation has also resulted in shifting visual relationships over time. Within the former operations core, growth of primarily volunteer vegetation now obscures views of the nursery buildings. In many areas throughout the landscape, former production fields or building sites are now maintained in low meadow or mown turf, creating more open visual relationships than existed historically. The prominent windrows continue to contain viewsheds within the site. Broad patterns of viewsheds and visual relationships exhibit continuity from the historic period.

B3. Topography & Natural Systems

Broad patterns of topography and natural systems evident at the Kingston Site reflect continuity from the historic period, though changes have occurred to a degree. The ground plane remains overall level with slight changes in grade throughout the former nursery landscape. Specific changes in topography are evident in the form of a few large earthen mounds or berms, one of which is located in the southeast quadrant of Mapleton Preserve. A tall berm was laid out along much of the southern edge of Mapleton Preserve. This feature was added after the sale of the adjacent land to Princeton University in 1986. The character of these berms and the surrounding, generally level ground plane suggests that these are products of human interventions. Natural systems important to the historic landscape character include the soil types found at the Kingston Site, which allowed a wide variety of plant materials to be grown. These soils likely remain in the landscape today. Together the site topography and natural systems provide strong opportunities to interpret historic site use, functionality, and character.

B4. Vegetation

Historically, site vegetation focused on nursery stock with some additional trees and shrubs planted to display the use and quality of stock materials. Wooded areas were found to the north and east of the operations core. Today, site vegetation includes primarily mown turf, meadow species, planted trees and shrubs, volunteer growth, wooded areas, and some remnant nursery stock.

Site vegetation has shifted since the end of the historic period, while some specific features remain intact. New plantings have been added to establish the Flemer Arboretum south of the entry drive. Former production fields are found with turf, mixed meadow, or volunteer growth. Little evidence remains of the once prolific nursery stock. Vegetation features that remain from the historic period include the wooded areas, windrows, and some tree and shrub plantings. (See Figures IV.6 and IV.8.) The woodlands that likely predated the establishment of the Kingston Site remain today and continue to provide a pleasant, scenic contrast to the open agricultural fields. The evergreen windrows planted during the historic period to protect nursery stock remain in the landscape today,

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serving as dramatic landmarks for the former nursery site. Tree plantings that remain from the historic period include a row of registered cultivar Princeton Sentry ginkgo growing along the south side of a former nursery drive at the edge of the former poly house area. (See Figure IV.8.) A large, spreading red oak remains in the landscape, in the area of the complex of buildings that included the former worker dormitory. Plantings around the former office building and near the site entrance likely remain from the historic period as well. Remnant nursery stock, selected specimen plantings, and examples of Princeton Nurseries cultivars are landscape-character defining features for this site.

Overall vegetation at the Kingston Site conveys a shift in character from the historic site vegetation. This is a result of the change in use from an active nursery to a site for passive public recreation, interpretation, and education. While overall patterns of vegetation have changed, some specific features remain in place today. In spite of the level of change that has occurred, strong opportunities exist to interpret the historic landscape and site vegetation.

B5. Circulation

Circulation features at the Kingston Site primarily consist of roads laid out during the historic period. These include paved drives and less formal compacted earth or gravel access ways. A few turf access roads have been added since the end of the historic period. Overall, site circulation reflects continuity from the historic period landscape.

The linear circulation features found on site today are extant historic, character-defining landscape features. The site entry at the former office building and large asphalt expanse through the operation core remain in their original configuration. The entry drive continues to serve as the primary entrance into the public site. The asphalt expanse that once functioned as a service area for trucks to access the operation core buildings is restricted from vehicular and pedestrian access today. Other historic access routes also remain in the current landscape. This includes the gently curving road west of the corridor of the stream course that runs diagonally through the Mapleton Preserve, the east-west road along much of the southern end of the Preserve, and a few road alignments south of the operation core and greenhouse cluster site that once provided access to the southern fields.

Changes to the circulation system have also occurred since the end of the historic period. A network of mown turf and compacted earth roads have been laid out through the southern half of Mapleton Preserve, providing convenient access routes through the open landscape. Although these roads did not exist during the historic period, their character is compatible with the remnant nursery drives. Another change in circulation is the removal of the Pennsylvania Railroad Rocky Hill Branch north of the operation core. The rail line was removed in the 1970s. Today, the former rail alignment is still evident in the landscape, providing a valuable interpretive opportunity as well as an opportunity for path linkages. The overall patterns and character of circulation features reflect continuity from the historic period, in spite of changes that have occurred.

B6. Hydrology & Water Features

The Kingston Site includes both natural and constructed water features. The natural water features contributed to the landscape character throughout the historic period and continue to play an important role today. The constructed water features have undergone more change since the end of

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the historic period in the 1980s. While changes have occurred, the hydrology and water features that remain in the Kingston Site landscape today contribute to the overall landscape character and sense of place.

Several prominent water features can be found in the former nursery grounds today. The three brooks remain from the historic period. This includes Heathcote Brook that continues to run east-west along the northern edge of the preserved lands. The two unnamed brooks remain evident in the landscape. The north-south brook, a tributary of Heathcote Brook, continues north to widen into a pond at the east of the former wholesale distribution yard before turning northwest and connecting to Heathcote Brook. Historic-period culverts continue to direct the brooks beneath former nursery roads. These features do not appear to have been altered since the as-built period, making them valuable contributions to the historic landscape.

Constructed water features have undergone more considerable changes over time. During the historic period, an extensive irrigation system was laid out throughout the nursery grounds. This included pipes and faucets as well as an impressive water tower. Much of this historic system has been removed, notably the water tower. While the overall system no longer functions, some pieces remain extant in the landscape today, including a number of faucets, pipes, and spigots that were observed on site. Another valuable historic water feature has been removed entirely since the end of the historic period. Around 2003, the swimming pool constructed as part of the contracted worker dormitory landscape was removed. This feature was a key element that conveyed the efforts of the Flemer family to cultivate positive relationships with the workers contracted from Puerto Rico. A small pond dug to control drainage remains south of the office building in what is today managed as the Flemer Arboretum. The majority of the constructed water features that existed during the historic period have been removed. The remnant elements of the once impressive irrigation system remain as valuable interpretive features.

Additional water features contribute to the historic character and integrity of the site, although they are located outside the preserved lands. Lake Carnegie and the Delaware and Raritan Canal continue to play an important role in defining the setting of the historic Kingston Site landscape. The proximity of the D&R Canal influenced William Flemer Sr's decision to locate Princeton Nurseries on this site; the D&R Canal was not heavily used by Princeton Nurseries for transportation, but later, after the canal was made into a water supply conduit in the 1940s, it was used as a source of water.³² Lake Carnegie also provided water, which flowed under the D&R Canal into a pond on nursery land. Today, the D&R Canal and Lake Carnegie contribute to its integrity of setting and provide additional opportunities for public recreation.

Hydrology and water features at the historic Kingston Site of Princeton Nurseries continue to play an important role in the broad landscape character. These features contribute to the historic setting of the former nursery lands and facilitate visitor understanding of historic use and layout of the grounds.

Two once-prominent water features have been removed since the end of the historic period. This includes the 75,000-gallon water tower and the in-ground employee swimming pool. Both of these features were strong testaments to the innovation implemented by the Flemer family. The water tower was an integral component and visual landmark of the water system established by William

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Flemer Jr. Once installed, the water system provided an innovative solution to functional and financial issues. It efficiently provided water for the expansive nursery lands and lowered the cost of the company fire insurance. It also allowed Flemer to create the Kingston Water Company, providing water to the entire village. The swimming pool was an important landscape element located near the contracted worker dormitory. The Flemer family, particularly John W. Flemer, strived to create a positive work environment for all nursery employees in order to avoid unionization. Providing good living conditions with the large dormitory for the contracted Puerto Rican workers and in-ground swimming pool was one way in which the Flemers fostered strong relationships with the nursery employees. Interpreting these lost landscape features would enhance understanding of the historic landscape and its significance.

B7. Structures, Site Furnishings & Objects

A range of structures, site furnishings, and objects can be found in the Kingston Site preserved lands. The majority of these features remain on site from the historic period while some features have been removed over time. A limited number of landscape objects have been introduced since the end of the historic period. Collectively, site structures, furnishings, and objects contribute to the landscape character and sense of place unique to the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site.

Structures continue to reflect the historic clustered spatial organization. The former office and blacksmith shop remain visually prominent structures marking the site entrance from Mapleton Road. The garage that was sited directly east of the blacksmith shop was removed after the historic period. Within the operation core, the packing shed and tree storage building remain while the lath building was demolished. The propagation house remains in the landscape along with the eight original greenhouses. However, the majority of the once impressive cluster of greenhouses and poly houses has been removed, altering the spatial organization and creating a much more open landscape at the core.

Distinct clusters of former worker residences also remain intact today. These are primarily located outside the current preserved lands. The stone Mathias Van Dyke House and outbuildings and the farm cluster that was once the home of William Flemer III are valuable historic groupings. The Shennard House continues to stand along the east side of Mapleton Road, west of the former worker dormitory area. A row of former worker houses are positioned along Mapleton Road opposite from the entry into the preserve. A preservation easement on the house façades helps ensure continuity of character. Another cluster of former worker housing is located on Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Ridge Road. These houses remain vacant today with plans in place to construct new house along the street. Many of the houses maintain the historic yellow and white color scheme. Although these historic resources are located outside the preserved lands, they provide a sense of the historic organization of the full nursery lands and their setting within the formerly rural community.

Small-scale features and site furnishings are limited. Remnant historic period post and rail fencing is found at the Flemer Arboretum, at the stone culvert along Railroad Avenue, and in front of former home of William Flemer III, outside the preserved lands. Post and wire fencing can be found near the southwest edge of the former greenhouse and poly house cluster. It is unknown if this fence existed historically or if it was added later. Given that no landscape features are in close proximity to this fencing today, it is likely that it existed historically as part of the greenhouse and poly house

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development. A chain-link fence has been added to the historic landscape, enclosing the former operation core. The chain-link fence that once surrounded the worker swimming pool has been removed. Fencing comprises the majority of small-scale features at the Kingston Site.

Other small-scale features at the preserved lands include some signs. Historically, signage included some large ‘Princeton Nurseries’ signs mounted on buildings and an entry sign. Today these nursery signs are no longer extant. Simple wooden signs have been erected at the site entrance noting both the headquarters for the Delaware & Raritan Canal State Park and Mapleton Preserve. A wooden display case containing visitor information has been added to the landscape surrounding the office building.

Some remnant historic period landscape objects can be observed in the landscape today. Small wooden stakes that once identified plant types in the production fields can be seen in several areas. Most noticeably, these are used at the base of trees planted around the office building. Metal mower guards once used to protect nursery stock also remain in the landscape. The large rock picker is situated in the landscape among dense vegetation, obscuring the intriguing historic equipment. These types of remnant historic period features offer valuable opportunities for interpretation and enhancing user experiences.

Structures, site furnishings, and objects play a strong role in defining the overall character of the landscape. Each feature enhances understanding of the historic function and character of the Kingston Site. Today many of the structures have fallen into disrepair. However, each of the features provides important opportunities to improve site character and visitor interpretation.

C. KINGSTON SITE LANDSCAPE SIGNIFICANCE & INTEGRITY

This section addresses the question of landscape significance and integrity of the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape in regard to the National Register of Historic Places guidance. Significance is considered using National Register criteria, followed by an integrity analysis based on the National Register’s seven aspects of integrity. Understanding the significance and level of integrity of the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape helps frame treatment and management recommendations.

C1. Landscape Significance

National Register of Historic Places evaluation criteria can help provide a framework for understanding the significance of the Kingston Site as a cultural landscape. Historic significance is defined in the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes (Guidelines)* as “the meaning or values ascribed to a cultural landscape based on [...] a combination of association and integrity.”³³ Similarly, the *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* explains that not only must a property be historically important but also the property must retain the “historic integrity of those features necessary to convey its significance.”³⁴ The cultural landscape and associated features communicating significance are required to meeting one or more of the four criteria to determine eligibility for listing in the National Register:³⁵

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- Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of United States history
- Criterion B: Associated with the lives of persons significant in the past
- Criterion C: Embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction
- Criterion D: Yielding or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history

The Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site cultural landscape incorporates historic significance to varying degrees under National Register Criteria A, B, and C. Over the course of the 20th century, Princeton Nurseries established itself as the largest wholesale supplier of shade and ornamental trees in the US.³⁶ This renowned nursery grew to 1,500 acres, supplying stock to properties, parks, and municipalities throughout the East Coast and into the Midwest. Princeton Nurseries developed and held patents for numerous plant varieties. The Kingston Site at one time employed over 300 workers, many of whom lived on site in worker housing others lived in company owned houses in the adjacent village of Kingston. Princeton Nurseries also had an important influence on other nurseries in the U.S. and abroad; with some of these the nursery and the Flemer family had close relations.

The site also meets Criterion B for its association with the Flemer family, particularly William Flemer III, who had a profound effect on commercial horticulture. Flemer III was an innovator in the field of horticulture, introducing dozens of new plant varieties while working at the Kingston Site. His internationally-known work on plant production, propagation, and development of new cultivars resulted in significant contributions to the field, and his achievements were rewarded with many awards and medals.

Finally, Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site is significant under Criterion C as a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. The site housed a nearly self-contained commercial nursery, where stock was cultivated and raised by a workforce, many of whom lived in housing, owned and maintained by the Princeton Nurseries, on the site. Intact character-defining features on the site speak to this important horticultural past.

C2. Contributing & Non-Contributing Features

Historical resources known as contributing features convey a historic district's sense of time, place, and historical development, and add to the character that make a historic district significant. A district can also contain buildings, structures, sites, objects, or open spaces that do not contribute to the significance of the district, called non-contributing features. The analysis of the Kingston Site landscape and character-defining features reveals a collection of both contributing and non-contributing resources.

Contributing resources found in the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site include:

- Linear paths and roads in an overall rectilinear pattern of former nursery fields
- Entry landscape at Mapleton Road,

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- Evergreen nursery windrows
- Princeton Sentry ginkgo row along south side of the former nursery road at edge of former poly house (aka container/ “can” house) and greenhouse area
- Shadblow along the access road west of the former production fields
- Columnar sugar maple marking the west entry to the nursery production fields from the entry landscape
- Red oak on site of former worker dormitory
- London plane tree allée on Mapleton Road
- Remnant nursery water system
- Former railroad beds; C&A RR roadbed west of Mapleton Road
- Pin oak allée lining the former Camden & Amboy RR Branch Line roadbed west of Mapleton Road
- Contributing buildings/structures as listed on the National Register nomination³⁷

Non-contributing resources include:

- Flemer Arboretum
- Scrub and old field volunteer vegetation in former field areas
- Non-contributing buildings/structures as listed on the National Register nomination³⁸

C3. Landscape Integrity

Landscape integrity is defined by the *Guidelines* as “the authenticity of a property’s historic identity, evinced by the survival of physical characteristics that existed during the property’s historic or prehistoric period.”³⁹ An evaluation of landscape integrity assesses the degree to which the landscape in its existing condition evokes the character and qualities of the historic period. The National Register of Historic Places identifies that integrity is comprised of seven aspects:⁴⁰

- *Location*
- *Design*
- *Setting*
- *Materials*
- *Workmanship*
- *Feeling*
- *Association*

Each of the seven aspects is addressed in relation to the existing Kingston Site cultural landscape. A ranking of high, moderate, or low historic integrity is noted for the existing landscape. The assigned ranking is designed to reflect the level of continuity and change by judging the factors that impact an aspect of integrity. Level of integrity rankings are generalized assessments of the integrity of this former nursery landscape, with an emphasis on the core nursery landscape.

Location

*Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.*⁴¹

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The location of a property is an important factor when considering the overall design and character. If a property is separated from its location, the recapture of a sense of the historic character becomes fragmentary. The location of Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site in the townships of South Brunswick and Plainsboro and within the context of other important area resources, such as Princeton University, St. Joseph's Seminary, Lake Carnegie, and the Delaware and Raritan Canal, is essential to its initial character, evolution, and current condition. Overall, the location of the nursery landscape is largely intact. However, the extent of the historic landscape has been altered over time with incremental development taking place within former nursery lands. In spite of the loss of a considerable amount of the original acreage, the portion of the Kingston Site landscape that remains today exhibits a high level of integrity for location.

Design

*Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property (or its significant alteration) and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials.*⁴²

The design of a historic property reflects the functions, technologies, and aesthetics of its historic period and can include elements such as massing, spatial organization, site layout, and types of plantings. Originally laid out as a large-scale nursery operation, functionality defined the initial development with consideration of the scenic and rural quality of the landscape also influencing the overall character. This overlay of functionality and scenic qualities is somewhat evident today. The overall spatial relationships reflect the historically linear organization of the landscape. The layout of remnant nursery roads and access ways and remnant plantings continue to reflect the functionality-driven original landscape design. Numerous historic landscape features remain intact and can be found in the landscape, primarily within the former nursery core. The Kingston Site landscape today exhibits moderate integrity of design.

Setting

*Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the character of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves how, not just where, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space.*⁴³

Setting addresses the character of the place in which the property played its historic role, which extends beyond the actual property boundaries. The setting of the Kingston Site cultural landscape reflects both continuity and change from the nursery setting during the period of significance. Integrity of setting has been diminished to a degree through the reduction of acreage. The historic Delaware and Raritan Canal setting to the west remains intact. Though the majority of the acreage that historically comprised the Kingston Site has been developed for new residential, institutional, and commercial use, the setting for the Mapleton Preserve continues to convey the former quality of

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these historic nursery lands. This persistence of agricultural character at Kingston Site setting yields a moderate level of integrity of setting.

Materials

*Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveal the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies.*⁴⁴

Materials consist of the physical elements used to construct a site and contribute to the overall landscape character. Considered in total, the Kingston Site landscape is composed of natural and constructed elements, many of which are comprised of original materials. Nursery vegetation, the most prominent landscape feature, is largely absent from the site, though a few nursery stock blocks are found within the preserved lands. Other intact vegetation elements such as planted windrows persist. Constructed nursery lanes and roads built for nursery use are still found in the landscape, many with original surface materials. Several nursery buildings remain in the landscape, including the packing shed, tree storage building, propagation house, and eight greenhouse, though many original nursery buildings and structures have been demolished. Overall, the materials of the existing landscape indicate a low to moderate level of integrity, largely due to the absence of nursery vegetation.

Workmanship

*Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components.*⁴⁵

Integrity of workmanship provides a sense not only of the design and appearance of specific landscape features, but also of the character of the landscape as a whole. The Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape continues to display evidence of workmanship in traditions and techniques related to commercial horticulture. Landscape features such as windrows and remnant stock blocks represent the adaptation of the landscape to suit nursery needs. Historic nursery road and access drive layouts define linear circulation patterns that characterized the landscape during the period of significance. While elements have been removed over time, the remaining historic structures and features display the style, craft, material, and technique of the period of significance. However, the loss of individual features detracts from the integrity of workmanship. Overall, the workmanship of remaining landscape features communicates a low to moderate level of integrity.

Feeling

*Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character.*⁴⁶

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The subjective and personal indicator of feeling relates directly to the levels of integrity present in location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship. The Kingston Site retains its original location and retains moderate integrity with regard to setting and design. The landscape displays moderate integrity of materials and workmanship. Adjacent development on former nursery lands and the loss of several nursery buildings have eroded the integrity of feeling, but the existing character of the surviving nursery landscape continues to convey some degree of its former commercial agricultural character. Limited remnant historic features provide an incomplete sense of the feeling of the historic landscape character. As an overall judgment, the historical feeling of the landscape reflects moderate integrity.

Association

*Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer.*⁴⁷

Association, like feeling, depends on personal perceptions. In determining a level of integrity for the Kingston Site, the touchstone is the overlay of functionality and rural, scenic character of the nursery landscape. Character-defining features also provide a strong sense of association. The historic patterns of spatial organization, land use, and topography are retained to a degree in the existing landscape. Historic nursery roads and access drives recall the former commercial use of the site. However, remnant nursery vegetation, a dominant feature of the landscape during the period of significance, is largely absent from the landscape. Although considerable changes have occurred, the existing landscape would likely be recognizable to those who shaped and worked the landscape. This association, however, might be less apparent to an individual not acquainted with the historic Princeton Nurseries context of the site. The cultural landscape demonstrates a moderate level of integrity of association.

Landscape Integrity Summary

In summary, the integrity for the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape exhibits an overall moderate level. Specifically, location retains a high level of integrity while design, setting, feeling, and association convey moderate levels with specific notable remaining features of the nursery era. Materials and workmanship reflect a low to moderate level due to loss of historic features, including, for example, nursery stock and stock blocks. The landscape today reflects both continuity and change with regard to the overall character and individual landscape features. The Kingston Site survives as an example of a thriving 20th century commercial nursery. Given the existing landscape character, remnant historic landscape features, and documentary evidence, opportunities exist to retain, manage, and interpret the historic landscape character. A recapture of missing or deteriorated historic landscape features is possible. Combined with improved management, recapture and interpretation of the former landscape character will enable visitors to better understand the history, evolution, and significance of the Princeton Nurseries Kingston Site landscape.

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CHAPTER IV ENDNOTES

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